

FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1970

STATEMENT BY SENATOR J. W. FULBRIGHT
CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

Vietnam Hearings -- 1970

Two weeks ago the Committee heard testimony on a number of legislative proposals concerning the war in Vietnam and related questions of American foreign policy. Today we initiate a new phase of these hearings in which primary attention will be given to American operations in Vietnam connected with pacification, the military advisory effort, the aid program, and the activities of USIA. Later we expect to hear testimony on the political and economic effects of the war within the United States.

All three phases of these hearings are oriented to a single set of objectives. Their immediate purpose is to provide information which will assist the Committee in acting on the legislative proposals that have been placed before it. The more general purpose of these hearings is to help inform American public opinion and to assist the President in his efforts to bring the war to an early, satisfactory conclusion.

For the next four days -- three in open session and the last in executive session -- the Committee will hear testimony on the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support program in Vietnam. This program -- usually referred to by its initials as "CORDS" -- encompasses most of the nonmilitary activities of the United States in Vietnam. Although it is under overall military command, CORDS is executed at all levels by civilian as well as military personnel. The programs under its general jurisdiction deal with pacification, refugees, enemy defectors, the South Vietnamese Regional and Popular Forces and the Phoenix program for the "neutralization" of key Vietcong personnel.

In addition to Ambassador William Colby, the director of CORDS, the Committee will hear testimony by representative CORDS personnel who work at the Corps, province and district levels, helping the South Vietnamese to perform more effectively in the political sphere. Because of the pertinence of these field activities to the Administration's overall policy of Vietnamization, the Committee has departed from normal practice by inviting the testimony of operative personnel as well as that of the official in overall charge of the program under study. We greatly appreciate the cooperation of these able and dedicated officials who have taken time from their difficult jobs in the field in Vietnam to assist the Committee in meeting its responsibility to advise and assist the President in his efforts to end this war.

By participating in these hearings, and by giving the Committee the benefit of their detailed knowledge and candid judgments of American political activities in Vietnam, the witnesses will perform a valuable service to the Senate and to the American people. At the same time the Committee

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is aware of the special sense of responsibility which operative officials quite naturally feel toward their own programs and agencies. In order to protect the witnesses from the understandable ambivalence they may feel with respect to their responsibilities to the agencies they work for on the one hand and to this Committee and the Senate on the other, we are asking them to be sworn in before giving their testimony. This practice has been found useful in other Committee inquiries, including the examination of security agreements and commitments abroad currently being conducted by the subcommittee of which Senator Symington is chairman.

We therefore ask you, Ambassador Colby, and those of your colleagues who are going to testify to rise. Do you solemnly swear that the testimony which you are about to give will be, to the best of your knowledge, the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Recognizing that, despite differing functions and responsibilities, we are all committed to the same objective -- which is to bring the war to an early and satisfactory conclusion -- we now invite the witnesses to proceed, starting with Ambassador Colby.

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